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\$17 MILLION MARIJUANA CULTIVATION OPERATION UNCOVERED; 15 INDICTED

FRESNO--United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that a federal grand jury sitting in Fresno indicted fifteen people involved in a large-scale conspiracy to cultivate and distribute approximately 4,400 pounds of marijuana having a street value of approximately \$17, 600,000.

The case was investigated by the Fresno Methamphetamine Task Force (FMTF), a federally-funded High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Initiative (HIDTA), consisting of multiple federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies, including the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), California Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement, Fresno County Sheriff's Department, Fresno Police Department, Madera County Sheriff's Department, Merced County Sheriff's Department, and California Highway Patrol and assisted by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) .

According to federal court documents and information revealed during court proceedings, on August 30, 2005, FMTF agents concluded a 14 month investigation into the cultivation and distribution of marijuana by the OSCAR ROSALES drug trafficking organization based in Fresno. This "take-down" was the second phase of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation, dubbed Operation Green Speaker, which initially targeted ROSALES, 39, of Fresno, and his distribution network. ROSALES, the owner of Exclusive Sounds, a stereo business located at 4376 W. Shaw Avenue in Fresno, was charged by indictment in June with conducting a continuing criminal enterprise, a federal crime which carries a mandatory minimum prison term of twenty years. In addition, ROSALES and 18 co-defendants were charged with conspiring to distribute and to possess with the intent to distribute marijuana.

Phase II of the investigation targeted ROSALES' domestic source of marijuana. The take-down of Phase II resulted in the service in Mendocino and Fresno Counties on August 30 of 14 federal search warrants and the issuance of 15 federal arrest warrants.

Pursuant to the execution of search and arrest warrants in Mendocino County, agents

arrested MICHAEL JAMES McALISTER 33, of Fresno and FREDDIE ALLEN DELGADO, 33, of Ukiah, California and seized approximately 4,400 pounds of marijuana, which has a street value of over \$17 million. Thereafter, VICTOR RAUL SUAREZ, JR., 31, of Laytonville, California, SCOTT ARTHUR McKINNEY, 30, of Pacifica, California and BENJAMIN JEFFREY LOMAX, 29, of Covelo, California turned themselves into federal law enforcement authorities in San Francisco. The Mendocino-based drug traffickers were charged in an four-count indictment returned by a federal grand jury sitting in Fresno on September 8 with conspiring to manufacture, to distribute, and to possess with the intent to distribute marijuana, manufacturing marijuana, and possessing marijuana with the intent to distribute.

Pursuant to the execution of arrest and search warrants in Fresno County on August 30, agents arrested GABRIEL JEDIDIAH SCHOENSTEIN, 29, JOSEPH MITCHELL RAMIREZ, 32, MICHAEL LAWRENCE SANCHEZ, 35, and RICHARD ALBERT CHRISTOFFERSEN, 33, all of Fresno, who were also charged in the indictment with conspiracy, manufacture of marijuana, and possession of marijuana with intent to distribute. In addition, SCHOENSTEIN was charged with possessing marijuana with intent to distribute within 1,000 feet of a public secondary school, namely, Clovis West High School in northeast Fresno. During a court-authorized search of SCHOENSTEIN's residence, Cole Elementary School, which is also nearby, was temporarily shut down.

During the execution of search warrants at eight locations in Fresno, including SCHOENSTEIN's residence, agents seized approximately 10 pounds of marijuana, a quarter pound of cocaine, a small quantity of psychedelic mushrooms, hashish, and ecstasy, and four firearms at various locations in Fresno. In addition, agents seized a 1997 Chevrolet Tahoe used by SCHOENSTEIN to facilitate drug transactions during the conspiracy and approximately \$82,000 in U.S. currency, which represents drug proceeds.

On August 31, 2005, DAVID LEE CROSSLEY, 33, of Fresno, turned himself into federal authorities after a Fresno County Sheriff's Department sergeant contacted him by telephone and indicated that law enforcement knew where he was and what he was doing. Surveillance conducted on August 30 at CROSSLEY's bank indicated that, while agents were executing search warrants at the Fresno locations, including CROSSLEY's residence, CROSSLEY went to his bank and attempted to withdraw money from his bank account which contained nearly \$25,000 in what is believed to be drug-related proceeds. CROSSLEY was also charged with conspiracy, manufacture of marijuana, and possession of marijuana with intent to distribute.

The following defendants were also charged with conspiracy, manufacture of marijuana, and possession of marijuana with intent to distribute: BARTHOLOMEW PILGRIM HENSLEY, 32, of Fresno, DONALD LEE GLASPIE, 33, of Fresno, ANDREW DAVID COWEL, 41, of San Francisco, KURT MARVIN KLINGER, 46, of Laytonville, and JULIANNE KERKLING STAHL, 36, of Laytonville. Arrest warrants have issued as to each of these defendants.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Karen A. Escobar of the Fresno United States Attorney's Office, who is prosecuting the case, the defendants face a mandatory minimum

prison term of ten years, a maximum prison term of life, and a fine of up to \$4,000,000 for conspiracy, manufacture of marijuana, and possession of marijuana with intent to distribute. Defendant SCHOENSTEIN also faces a maximum prison term of ten years and a fine of up to \$1,000,000 for the charge of possessing marijuana within 1,000 feet of a public secondary school.

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